

# Tis the Season - Or Is It?

By: Keith Greer

*"You observe days and months and seasons and years. I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain." (Galatians 4:10,11)* Once again, it's that time of year-the Christmas season. Unfortunately, this "special holy holiday" has become a mega holiday for the retail stores. Some have suggested that we put Christ back into Christmas. What do they mean by this? Let me suggest that Christ has never been in Christmas!

**Christ's birth.** *"Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem." (Matthew 2:1)* It is true that our Lord was born of the virgin Mary in the town of Bethlehem, as prophesied by the prophets in *Isaiah 7:14* and *Micah 5:2*. And, wise men came to see Him. But when did they come, and how many? *"When they heard the king, they departed; and behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh." (Matthew 2:9-11)*

Many believe that there were three wise men. But the Bible does not tell us how many made the journey. The wise men are depicted as seeing Jesus on the night He was born, or shortly thereafter, in the manger. But notice that Matthew's account says they came into the HOUSE-not the barn where Jesus was born because there was no room in the inn. According to many of the Christian fathers who wrote during the first century, Jesus could have been as old as six or eight months when the wise men found Him. Following their departure, the angel told them not to return to Herod because he wanted to take the Child's life. Joseph and Mary were told to take Jesus and flee into Egypt.

What about the **date** of Jesus birth? A Roman Catholic Church council determined that Jesus was born on December 25. Scriptural evidence actually points away from a winter date. Shepherds were in the field (*Luke 2:8-11*). In Palestine, the sheep are kept in shelters or pens to shield them from the cold weather from October through early March.

Another important question to consider is: where do the Scriptures command us to observe Jesus' birth? There is no command, example, or inference that the early church observed December 25 as a **holy day**. The only day we are commanded to remember is the day Jesus died. We do this on the Lord's Day when we observe the Lord's Supper (*Matthew 26:26-29; 1 Corinthians 11:23-29; Acts 20:7*). Therefore, we must conclude that we cannot put Christ back into Christmas-He was never there!